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Hosea Ballou

UNIVERSALIST PUBLICATIONS
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1903



Hosea Bullen

HOSEA BALLOU

AND

*THE GOSPEL RENAISSANCE OF
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

BY

REV. JOHN COLEMAN ADAMS, D.D.

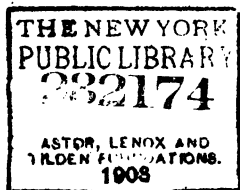


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HOSEA BALLOU

AND

THE GOSPEL RENAISSANCE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

*Delivered before the Universalist General Convention at Buffalo, N.Y.,
Sunday, October 20, 1901.*

By REV. JOHN COLEMAN ADAMS, D.D.

“The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner.” — Ps. 118 : 22.

WE are met for the first session of this Convention in a new century. It has seemed to me that no theme could better fit the time and occasion than one which should send our minds back over the century just closed, to trace the relations of our Church to the development of religious thought in America during that period.

It is a fact not always noted that geography has an important bearing upon the evolution of religious ideas. The same process of enlightenment and growth may go on simultaneously in various parts of the world. The same problems may be worked out in very different and quite independent ways in different lands. The progress of the Spirit in America during the nineteenth century is a case in point. The liberal movement in Christianity has

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gone on here in ways peculiar to the land and its own religious life. The Broad Churchmen of England and America stand to-day upon practically the same great affirmations. But the process by which we have come into our convictions in America is quite independent of that which has prepared the way for our brethren across seas. We had our own conditions to start with, our own leaders, our own great campaigns. The Universalist Church has had a most important function in the great movement which has gone on over the world, as a revival of the primitive Gospel of Jesus. To appreciate this work calls for a review of our religious progress for a full century.

To go back a hundred years in America's religious life is to sink pretty much all the names which are the great spiritual landmarks for the men and women of to-day. The theologians may fix their eyes on the compass and the stars, but the people pick their path by the waymarks of great lives. And they march and climb to-day with their eyes on the mighty names of the last hundred years. Retracing the years of that century, think what we lose! Brooks and Beecher and Bushnell sink below the horizon; Theodore Parker disappears, and the Wares and William Ellery Channing. Every Unitarian church vanishes, and most of the churches of our own name. We lose the books we have read the most—Bushnell's "Vicarious Sacrifice" and Farrar's "Eternal Hope" and Fiske's "Destiny of Man," with such epoch-making poems as "The Eternal Goodness" and "In Memoriam," and such yeasty writings as Emerson's "Essays" and Parker's "Discourses on Religion." We find ourselves in

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a time of theological gloom and religious pessimism, untempered by the liberal faith and good cheer. Methodism offered the only assuagement of Calvinism which the people could accept, and all the mitigation it could present was to affirm that if the human race was totally wrecked, the fault was not God's, but man's. Small consolation that, to those adrift and sinking with the hulk! The thought of God brought up the idea of a stern and vengeful being. Jesus was the peacemaker, pleading with an angered monarch. Human nature was the synonym for all depravities. Life meant a probation, with the chances all against the soul. Salvation was an insurance arrangement which guaranteed a future heaven. Parents mourned for little babes in hell. Men dared not mourn at all for their other unregenerate dead. John Murray, indeed, was abroad in the land. But few men dared give audience to the strange faith he proclaimed. And even he himself did not comprehend the mighty work which was to be done, nor was he equal to the mighty thoughts which were to bring in the new era. His theology was hardly more than a sterilized Calvinism — an attempt to purge the popular teaching of the germs of infidelity and despair. It was a prophecy of the great religious break-up, as the bluebird is the prophet of the spring. The last third of the eighteenth century in America was a very winter of religious thought. The streams of a true spiritual apprehension were frozen. The world lay cold and hard under the icy breath of Calvinism. The seeds of generous sentiment were locked in the soil. But the beginning of the nineteenth century was a theological month of March.

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The air began to change, a milder spirit breathed over men's thoughts. A new element was warring with the frigid dogmas of the stern old creed. And like all the new elements in man's moral life, this was incarnated in a human soul. It was the out-put of a human life. That life was lived by Hosea Ballou.

In 1771, ten years before Channing's birth, thirteen years after Edwards had died, there was born in a little hamlet of New Hampshire a man who was to be the equal, in his thought and his work, of both Channing and Edwards. When the Calvinism of which Edwards was the type and the exponent was almost absolute in America, this man thought out the system which was to displace Calvinism as the religion of the masses. It was he and not John Murray who gave to Universalism the solid basis which saved it from the destruction which awaited the premises on which Murray and Rely had rested it. It was he, and not Channing, who first gave form and force to the truths about the Unity and the Fatherhood of God, which have steadily crowded all less worthy doctrines out of men's minds. He preached the central truth which inspired the Unitarian schism, eight years before Channing's settlement in Boston, and twenty years before the outbreak of the great controversy in the Congregational churches. In 1805 he gave to the world the "Treatise on Atonement," the first American book to outline and to urge the Broad Church theology, producing a religious classic which condensed in its scant pages the essence of the ideas which were to dominate the thinking of a hundred years.

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If we should honor the man who first announces a great system of truth ; or him who frames it by his own unaided thought ; or him who compels the world to pause and answer its searching questions ; surely Hosea Ballou deserves triple honors from all fair-minded students of American religious thought. If we draw a drag-net over all this land to bring in those who have inclined a little, or contributed much to this faith, why should he be ignored who stands out as the pioneer in time and in logic—the man who first thought and first taught the essentials of the New Theology ? For his spiritual achievement as well as for his missionary work, Hosea Ballou takes a foremost place among the religious leaders of our land.

He was of the humblest origin ; and poverty, toil and scant resources were his portion from childhood. He had no schooling till he was nineteen, and then but for a few months. But out of a native intellectual strength, a homely genius, and profound spiritual insight, he found means to attain the highest conceptions of God and of Christianity which the world has yet reached. He was a man after the fashion of Abraham Lincoln. The same common-sense, calm judgment, native reasonableness, the same clear moral perceptions and loving kindness which marked Lincoln's soul were Hosea Ballou's. As Lincoln, too, appealed to the common people, and carried them with him, so Ballou was one whom they heard gladly and suffered to persuade them. If any man shall take the pains to read the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and then to study the sermons and writings of Hosea Ballou, he cannot fail to be impressed and moved by the similarity of their

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spirit, the likeness in their tone, the simple dignity, the homely strength, the fresh and human spontaneity they both exhibit.

Early in life Hosea Ballou began his contention with the popular theology. Remember what that theology was ; recall the five points of Calvinism — if you can ! Predestination, Particular Redemption, Total Depravity, Effectual Calling, Final Perseverance. Recall the dogmas to which these were super-added, as to a common foundation — the Trinity, the Vicarious Atonement and Everlasting Hell. It was a frightful nightmare of horrible teachings. It affirmed God, and then described Him in terms which made him a Devil. It talked of Divine Justice and meant superhuman Cruelty. It proclaimed as “ Good News ” the tidings that the greater portion of mankind are hopelessly lost. It grounded the universe in wrath and clouded the glory of heaven with the inextinguishable smoke of hell. Against all this system Ballou’s soul rose in revolt. Before he was thirty years of age, he had thought and prayed his way out of it all. He rejected the idea that some are elected to be saved, but the majority to be damned ; that God hates the sinful world ; that Jesus’ death appeases His anger ; that humanity is wholly depraved ; that retribution is to be inflicted forever in hell ; that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are coequal with the Father in the mysterious person called the Trinity, and that man must be miraculously changed in all his nature before he can be acceptable in God’s sight.

His own teaching started from the basis of God’s unchanging love to man ; of His eternal Fatherhood ; of man’s sonship to God ; of Jesus’ work as

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the reconciler of man to God; of the certainty of retribution, and of man's final salvation. He formulated, a hundred years ago, the doctrine that love, not wrath, is the center of the Gospel message. He proclaimed the grand truth of the universal Fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of man, the atonement as a sign of God's love seeking to overcome man's estrangement, the natural character of penalty, the educating purpose of life, and all experience and discipline as God's open road to glory and to grace. His method was dignified and noble. His spirit was Christian. His practical teaching was wise and effective. He went to the people. He traversed New England and New York, preaching wherever a hearing could be had. He argued like Socrates. He pleaded like Paul. He was as serene as the firmament. But like the firmament his soul could open in flashes of electric wrath against cruel error and unbelief in the goodness of God. His shrewd humor played through all his discourse, never getting the better of his dignity, always apposite and pointed and effective. He was one of the greatest popular preachers in America. Had he been the apostle of a popular creed instead of the bold and uncompromising assailant of all the theological capital in which the churches had invested their faith, he would have had a following second to no great orator in our pulpit. Wherever he went, he commanded a hearing. Men listened to him. The common people heard him gladly. While the voice of Channing and the Unitarian scholars went out to the cultured and the intellectual class, Ballou was talking to the common people. He was sowing the seed where it always germinates best for the

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harvest of a reform in religious and moral ideas, — in the hearts of the masses. And when his work was done, a new era had opened in American life. He had not only given form and consistency to the theology of the Universalist Church, he had put ideas into the hearts of the common people of New England, which are to-day just springing up in the fresh green of the blade out of the furrow.

It is important to remember that in this great intellectual and spiritual work Ballou was an original student, pondering, without teachers, or philosophical preconceptions, or religious partisanship, the message of Jesus. His is the first-hand study of a simple, straightforward, godly mind. Men who are suspicious of modern interpretations which lead to Universalism and think that they are the confusions of philosophy obscuring the Gospel, should remember that this man studied no systems, and had no theories to force into the Bible. He was trying to frame a theology out of the Bible, not to distort the Bible to fit a theology. "I never read anything on the doctrine of Universal Salvation before I believed it, the Bible excepted; nor did I know, that I now recollect, that there was anything published in its vindication in the world." This is his own testimony. He was a "Bible-man" from his youth up. Dwight Moody himself was not more thoroughly a man of one book. That he found the faith he did, under such conditions, at least frees it from the suspicion of being a mere philosophical theory!

It is a delicate thing to undertake to estimate the real part that any man has played in the changing of men's thoughts and the correction of their errors. And it may be questioned whether we are not

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assigning too large a force to the voice and the brain of Hosea Ballou. If any man challenges the judgment, he must deal with the facts. The change of theological thought within the first half of the nineteenth century is beyond dispute. So is the activity of Hosea Ballou in the spread of those truths which he formulated and defended. We know that his preaching and his writing were a positive force in the Universalist Church. His theology speedily took the place of Murray's and he led his brother ministers forth to an aggressive and unflinching warfare. They went to the people. They rallied them in halls, in school-houses, in private homes. They traversed the land from Maine to Ohio. They wrote books and they published newspapers. They argued, they persuaded, they appealed. And when they had wrought for half a century they had won a great victory. Their influence had been far wider than the area they themselves had covered. The reformer is always more influential than his immediate following would indicate. He gets wide notice and much help from unintended co-workers. His opponents help to spread his doctrines, and those who come to check remain to disseminate his views. The influence of Strauss in compelling a new study of the Bible was out of all proportion to the sale and reading of his "Life of Jesus." More men heard of evolution from those who opposed its doctrines than ever read Spencer or Darwin. So Ballou and his disciples spread their gospel through those who withstood and denounced it. The people caught the message from lips which only opened to condemn it. Like the seeds of wayside flowers, which fasten themselves upon wayfaring birds and

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beasts and human beings, so the word was caught up by the casual or the unfriendly hearer, and passed on to fruitful soil.

Remember once again that before Channing's silver voice had attuned itself to the great truths it was to declare, Ballou was preaching all that Channing ever preached, and more, of the Unity and Fatherhood of God; of the Divinity and Dignity of Human Nature; of Salvation by and through Character. A generation before Horace Bushnell was ordained, he was standing upon Bushnell's doctrine of atonement. Seventy years before Beecher was storming the hearts of Plymouth church with his denunciations of the devilishness of Calvin's God, he had said all that Beecher said, in a half dozen lines of the "Atonement." And he added to the cardinal points of the "new theology" what no one of these, not even Channing himself, had come to see was the necessary conclusion of their own premises, the final harmony of all souls with God. There is not a single point of the later thought, except its view of the Scriptures, which Ballou does not anticipate in the "Treatise on Atonement." There is not a prophet of the new faith whose voice rings out with his in that early dawn of the new thought.

Lest it be suspected that I am yielding to the enthusiasm of the partisan and the advocate, I must cite to you the testimonies which confirm my statements. Out of the pages of the "Treatise," let me bring certain representative utterances which, though brief, shall, I promise you, be decisive of the views of this forerunner of our latter day thought.

First, listen to his simple but unmistakable

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enunciation of the doctrine of God's Love and Fatherhood. Remember into what a darkened Christendom he spoke it. Recall those "Five Points of Calvinism." Then hear him. He has been insisting upon the truth that it is not God who needs to be reconciled to man, but man who needs to be reconciled to God. "Here," he says, "we shun those difficulties which have represented the Gospel of Christ so inconsistent. We now view the Almighty, the same yesterday, to-day and forever; by no means changed in his disposition toward his children, but always designing and working all things for their good. There is no need of the self-contradictory notion of altering an unalterable being; of satisfying an infinite dissatisfaction; of reconciling a being who was never unreconciled; of producing love in love itself; of causing an eternal unchangeable friend to be friendly, or of offering a sacrifice to the eternal Father of our spirits, to cause him to love and to have mercy on his offspring" (p. 108). "(God) comprehends the whole futurity of all moral beings and loves them as his own offspring, with a love consistent with his own immutable existence." (p. 102.) There is the four-square granitic statement of the Fatherhood, the *universal* Fatherhood of God, as neither uttered nor believed in those dark days.

Second, hear his explicit affirmation of man's divine descent and heavenly nature. We have heard him call men the offspring of God. He means it in no narrow or partial sense. "Man is of heavenly extraction, is in his nature allied to the heavenly state in which he was created before he was formed of the dust of the earth." "Were the earth with all her vines and fruits my own

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this moment, on condition that I should give up the riches which I see in this heavenly relation, my bargain would make me poor." (2d Ed. p. 32.) He shows a prophetic grasp of the great consequences involved in this truth, which we of to-day name "the solidarity of the race," when he says (p. 190), "I do not conceive that one part of humanity can be made perfectly happy while the rest is in misery. When Paul spoke of those who died in faith not having received the promise, he says, 'God having provided some better things for us, that they without us could not be made perfect.'"

He had fully grasped and decisively declared the doctrine of salvation by character: "To believe in any other atonement than the putting off of the old man, with his deeds, and the putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, is carnal-mindedness and is death." (p. 123.) "The salvation which God wills is a salvation from sin. Then as much as you desire salvation, you will wish to avoid sin and wickedness." "No man understandingly wants salvation any further than he wants more holiness." (p. 233.) "As atonement is a complete fulfilment of the law of the heavenly man, it causes its recipient to love God and his fellow-creatures in as great a degree as he partakes of its nature." (p. 132.)

His doctrine of atonement is a complete reversal of all the Orthodox teachings for fifteen hundred years. No wonder that the theologians gnashed on him with their teeth. If they raged over Horace Bushnell fifty years later, who still clung to the main lines of Orthodoxy, why should they not condemn this man whose whole scheme collided with

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their own? He puts the significance of the work of Jesus Christ entirely in its effect upon man. It is man who needs atonement with his Father, not his Father who needs to be reconciled to man. "It is evident that God is not the unreconciled, and does not require an atonement to reconcile him to his creatures. Let us now turn on the other side and see if man be not unreconciled to God; and if it would not be more reasonable to reconcile man to his Maker than to reconcile God to the sinner." (p. 102.) "Let it be understood that it is man who receives the atonement, who stands in need of reconciliation, who being dissatisfied, needs satisfaction; and not place these imperfections and wants on Him who is infinite in his fulness; and the doctrine of atonement may be sought for in the nature of things and found rational to the understanding." (p. 107.) That is the kernel of his whole doctrine. It is Bushnell's to the letter. It is the doctrine of the new, the modified Orthodoxy. Channing was still saying in 1815, "Liberal Christians and Orthodox both agree that Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and intercessions, obtains forgiveness for sinful men." "On the question, 'how,' they think the Scripture has given little light." Long before the Unitarians had made up their minds on this vital point, Ballou had declared himself with a clearness which cannot be mistaken, and had fully assumed the modern position.

The doctrine of the Trinity as it was held in his day, he openly repudiated. He was frankly and squarely Unitarian in his doctrine about God. In answer to a hypothetical question whether he would consider the Mediator no more than equal with men,

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he answers, "Yes, were it not that our Father and his Father, and our God and his God, hath anointed him above his fellows." "The oneness of the Father and Son is their union and agreement in the great work which he has undertaken." (p. 113.) He marshals the common-sense arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity in no uncertain fashion: "If Jesus Christ were really God, it must be argued that God really died. Again, if the Godhead consists of three distinct persons, and each of these persons be infinite, the whole Godhead amounts to the amazing sum of infinity multiplied by three! If it is said neither of these persons alone is infinite, I say the three together, with the addition of a million more such would not make an infinite Being." (p. 92.)

A good many people still live who remember the famous Sunday in the eighties when Henry Ward Beecher startled even Plymouth Church by his fierce denunciations of that idea of God which represents Him as having created millions of souls only to damn them. It was counted a brave utterance, and it made the whole country quake. He declared the effect of the dogma of reprobation to be "to transform the Almighty into a monster more hideous than Satan; and I swear by all that is sacred that I will never worship Satan, though he should appear dressed in royal robes and sitting on the throne of Jehovah." Eighty years before, Ballou had put the same thought in his own incisive way: "Had this Devil been consulted by the Almighty when He laid the plan of man's final destiny, I cannot conceive him capable of inventing one more eligible to his infernal disposition than this I am now disputing." (p. 71.) Still again he thrusts the terrible

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dilemma upon his reader: "We are told of a God who acts for his own benefit abstractly from his creation; and that in millions of cases he finds it most to his glory to make his rational, hoping, wanting creatures miserable; and this is called goodness. We are likewise told of a devil, who acts for his own gratification and who delights in making God's creatures miserable, and this is called badness. But for my part, according to such statements the difference between goodness and badness is so small I can hardly distinguish it. It is profane, in my opinion, to attribute a disposition to the Almighty which we can justly condemn in ourselves." (p. 82.) Have we not heard that sentiment put in almost the same phrase, in a modern poet's familiar verse?

"Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me!"

When John Greenleaf Whittier wrote those noble lines, I, for one, believe that the spirit of Hosea Ballou held the torch which illumined his understanding, and almost breathed the words into his ear.

It will be seen that Hosea Ballou was not a man of "one idea." It is not true that he was chiefly devoted to his views on future (or no-future) punishment. That was a matter whose prominence he deprecated. It constituted but a secondary matter in his theology. It was a point much misrepresented. Ballou's contention was twofold: first, that punishment is contemporaneous with sin, begins with it, continues to accompany it; second, that the changes in environment and condition at death will

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so influence the soul as to overcome its revolt and rebelliousness and bring it into a quick penitence. He would never admit that he held death to be the savior of man; and he resented the imputation that he taught, as Channing charged, that death has power to change and purify the soul. He claimed that the only difference between himself and other believers in the ultimate holiness of man, was a difference as to the intensity of the means of grace and the speed with which they would operate.

But the prominence given to Ballou's views on future punishment is out of all proportion to its relative importance in his thought. As he conceived it, the essential matter in regard to punishment was not its duration, but its certainty and its adequacy. It was not so important to him that men were saved at death, as that they were disciplined in life. His main contention was not the one which linked death and glory, but one which bound together life and judgment. He made a life-long fight to impress the truth that "the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." But the spiritual fact which was vital to his teaching is not expressed in the adverbial clause of time and place, — "in the earth," — but in the impressive predicate, — "shall be recompensed!" Very properly does Dr. Brooks credit Ballou with putting into the thought of the world "this vital fact concerning the instant and constant operation of God's moral government." No phrase ever framed could have crowded into a few words so complete a statement of Ballou's teachings concerning punishment as is contained in the new affirmation of Universalist principles,

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"The certainty of a just retribution for sin." That was the heart and soul of his doctrine. He brought the period of the operation of God's judgments against sin forward from eternity into time. He impressed on men that punishment is not delayed till some remote judgment-day, because every day is judgment-day, and the great assize has begun. And I venture to say that more dissent and opposition was provoked by this teaching, which is hardly disputed to-day, than by his peculiar views as to repentance at death.

That incident of his teaching was no essential part of the system he outlined, and in time dropped away from it. He had stated a truth whose ripper development was to refute his own application of it to this life and the next. The doctrine that sin involves, entails, and produces retributive processes, leads finally to the conclusion that those processes may not work themselves entirely to a finish in this life. But that is only a detail of the greater thought which Ballou grasped and enforced with singular power, that here or hereafter, in any environment or condition, salvation is secured only by and through the processes of unfolding character. And it was at this very point in his teaching that he was most bitterly attacked and resisted. The odium which Ballou encountered was by no means chiefly because he taught no future punishment, but because he taught the certainty of punishment on earth. To the Orthodoxy of his day it was abhorrent to hold that God was judging sinners in this world. In that theology all punishment was postponed, all judgment post-mortem. If this seems incredible to a generation which is everywhere dif-

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ferently taught, it is because Hosea Ballou wrought such a vigorous work, lived such a strenuous life.

It ought now to be clear that Ballou's thought was not narrowed to a mere affirmation of the salvation of all souls. It was a rounded and symmetrical body of doctrine in which the whole emphasis of interpretation was shifted from Law to Love; from Vindictiveness to Discipline; from Fear to Faith; from Sovereignty to Fatherhood. It affirmed as the true keynote of God's providence in the spiritual realm, not evil but good, not retribution but discipline, not damnation but salvation. It was a genuine revival of the real good news of Jesus Christ, a true evangel, gladdening the whole world of theological thought.

I do not think I undervalue the significance of John Murray's work, its courageousness, its dynamic force, its initial vitality. But his thought, as compared with Ballou's, was as March with its herald hepatica compared with the flower-bloom of May. Universalism never could have lived far into the nineteenth century, resting upon the grounds upon which Murray placed it. It was a proper conclusion without adequate premises. It was a real truth deduced from imaginary facts. In briefest terms, it was the old Calvinism over again, with this difference: Murray held that since Christ died for all a price of ransom has been paid for all, and all are therefore redeemed. In his thought, the absolute terms of the spiritual transaction between the Father and Son inures to the good of the human race; and since Christ has paid for all, God must deliver all.

One emerges from this strained argument and

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fantastic logic into Ballou's calm, perspicuous thought, as from a Dutch garden, with its clipped and artificial forms, into a lovely landscape: in the one everything is distorted to suit a preconceived pattern; in the other the forms of tree and shrub follow the gracious lines of nature. Murray's theology adopts all the impossibilities of Calvinism. Ballou rejects them all for the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. He outran Murray in his comprehension of the plan and providence of God, as Paul outran the apostles at Jerusalem in perceiving the mission of the Gospel. In the essentials of theology he out-thought Jonathan Edwards, who is counted the foremost of American theologians, as Abraham Lincoln out-thought John C. Calhoun in the philosophy of the Union. He out-trusted Channing in the sublime faith in the Fatherhood which both proclaimed, as Charles Sumner out-trusted Rufus Choate in his faith in democracy and liberty. Beecher is counted the great apostle of the doctrine of the certainty of love in the Divine Plan. But Henry Ward Beecher would have been as impossible without the pioneering of Ballou as Lincoln would have been impossible without Washington. Horace Bushnell helped thousands of evangelical believers to a rational theory of the atonement. But Horace Bushnell only put into Orthodox minds a thought they had already rejected when it came from the lips of the arch-heretic, Hosea Ballou. Phillips Brooks did a great and noble spiritual work with the Christian believers of America. But Phillips Brooks's work was possible only because of a sentiment prepared to receive his word by the toil of Ballou and his fellows.

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By and by, when there shall be an unprejudiced study of the sources of American religious thought in the nineteenth century, Ballou's name will be brought forward into the light and he will be recognized as the one clear, courageous, and wholly consistent thinker of his time, — the great forerunner of the faith of the twentieth century. He was the first in point of time. He was foremost in the scope of his thought. It may seem audacious to claim so much for one whom the religious world so largely ignores. But the fact remains that his interpretation of the Gospel is that which is fast taking possession of men's minds as the real and permanent truth about it. If it be the truth about that Gospel then it is a deeper and broader and a higher thought about it than any which has been entertained. And if it be the deepest thought about the Gospel which has come out of the religious life of America, then the man who first gave it in its symmetry and its fullness to the American world is the profoundest, the clearest and the greatest of American religious thinkers. The logic of events demonstrates it.

If it be deemed singular that there should be so slender a recognition and so small credit given to one who sounded the great advance in the theology of his century, it must be remembered that prejudice and ignorance have in his case wrought their perfect work. To the majority of those who have written the religious history of America he was a heretic. And too many of those who have inherited his teachings have never taken the pains to seek for their origin. It takes time for the world to recognize its prophets. Ballou is not the first great

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leader whose fame has lingered and whose services have been ignored, while others received the credit of the things he wrought. For three hundred years the fame of the greatest of Englishmen, the vindicator of democracy in Great Britain, the destroyer of monarchical power in England, has suffered eclipse behind the names of small statesmen and smaller kings, and it is only to-day that Oliver Cromwell is coming into his rights, and inheriting the honor which belongs to him as great general, great statesman, great liberator. While so strange a paradox as this is fresh in the mind of the student of history, there need be no surprise that Hosea Ballou still awaits his proper honors.

When the Universalist Church re-wrote its fundamental principles, it did two notable things. In the first place it wrote down what is unquestionably the "coming creed" of Christendom. More and more we perceive in the talk of the people, the drift of the bright books, the trend of social reform, what are to be the cardinal doctrines of the Twentieth Century Christian. First and foremost stands the Fatherhood of God as a relation true for all men, of all conditions, for all eternity. You can no more keep that word "Father" from the lips of mankind, than you can keep the morning sun from the mountain tops, the broad vales, the hollows of the sea. The historical and scientific spirit of the age has completely undone the old theology of the Trinity, and the whole energy of the Trinitarian is now devoted to the effort to conceal his actual Unitarianism by stretching and straining the old phrases. And the only Atonement which men are recognizing in Christ's work to-day,

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is that which brings man to his Father's side through a following of this spiritual leader. Our doctrine about the Bible is a statement of the spirit in which all Christian men are going to the Scriptures. No ethical teacher would now affront the moral intelligence of men by denying the certainty of a just Retribution for sin. And if one may trust the private advices which are everywhere thrust upon us, as well as the public confession of accredited teachers, the belief in the Final Salvation of all souls is a heresy of such alarming proportions that it will soon become the universal orthodoxy. So that no recent expression of theological faith condenses so much of the current conviction of men, as the five principles of Universalism.

But, in the second place, when we framed that statement, we were translating the theology of Hosea Ballou out of the quaint phrase of the "Treatise on Atonement" into the speech of our day. If the distinguished Convention which adopted that document had deliberated with Ballou's little volume open before them, they could not more successfully have embodied the spirit of his teachings. Their action showed the power of his work, and its vitality after a hundred years of test and trial. It was the distinct assertion of Ballou's theology. It was his vindication as thinker and as prophet.

Again let it be reiterated, that the Universalism of Ballou, like that of the Church his thought has dominated, was not and is not, as one of his critics has called it, "a special issue" taken against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is a lucid, a coherent and a rational theological system. All its

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great doctrines have one after another come into large acceptance among progressive Christian thinkers, save only the one great conclusion which logically completes and justifies the rest. And to this few objections are any longer urged to which reasoning men attend or need to attend. There still persists the fear which Dr. Abbott entertains, that some wills may elect evil forever. But this is an apprehension which a clearer psychology will remove. For the will is not a thing in the air, a capricious or indeterminable force, without law and without reason. Will is not an entity out of all relations. It is not a faculty, but a process. It is self-acting only in the sense that it is Self *acting*. Will does not control self; self controls will. All the self goes into every act of will, so that whatever enlightens the intellect, or touches the affections, enlightens or moves the will. Every conversion proves the will to be accessible. The whole problem of the salvation of all souls is involved in the salvation of any soul. If any will can be persuaded, all can be. If God can save Dr. Abbott, he can save anybody; not because Dr. Abbott is a sinner above other sinners, but because he is one of us, involving in his own nature all men's characteristics. So as psychology sheds its light on that problem, the difficulty will fade away.

There remains the suggestion that annihilation may intervene to balk the good will of God, and sinners may exhaust their vitality and perish of moral paresis. They may not have enough moral momentum in this life to carry them beyond its confines. But nobody has ever shown that personality or self-consciousness, which is its essence, is

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one whit abated by inveterate sin. And as for the new doctrine of "immortality," men will believe that only when they believe that each new-born babe is in peril of losing its immortality unless it can attain a certain minimum of moral vitality.

With such frail barriers, and no more, to hold back the grand conclusions of Ballou and the Church he indoctrinated, how long will it be ere the waters break through and flood the thirsting souls of men! No wonder that the keenest minds in other Churches are perceiving the inevitable and preparing themselves for it. Says Dr. Gordon in his paper on Jonathan Edwards, "If the plan of salvation included only a part of mankind, the God of Absolute Love must be surrendered; if the God of Absolute Love is at the head of the universe, the plan of salvation inclusive of only a part of mankind must be abandoned." How long can rational men halt at that dilemma? Suppose we say, "If two and two do not make four, our science of numbers must be surrendered; if our science of numbers is true, the theory that two and two do not make four must be abandoned." How long shall we hesitate and say, "Nevertheless, we are not to be reckoned believers in the arithmetic!"

In contrast with such logical helplessness, how striking is the firm and vigorous thought of Ballou, whose simple faith could not hesitate for a moment as to the sanity and straightforwardness of the universe, but moved right on to a rational and loving solution of the great problems of the soul. There is no finer figure in all theological history than his, as so many of us have seen him in that historic picture which presents him with the open

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Bible by his side, and the light of truth in his eyes, the type of fearless faith, of unswerving trust in the love of God and the reasonableness of his world. Brave spokesman of the truth, he stumbled not at the logic of faith, but faced the conclusions to which his premises led on, like the strong believer that he was.

He dared deny ! But faith was in his doubt !
As when the pilot puts his ship about,
Rejecting the false lights upon his lee,
And trusts the mystery of the open sea.

It is to the championship of these great spiritual ideas that this dear Church of ours is called and is committed. The whole Christian world is aglow with the spirit of this faith. Even in its most inert and sluggish bodies, the thrill of the new life is felt. The battle of a century is not yet won, but the new ideas will never go out in eclipse any more. The old Gospel has been born again in its graciousness, its breadth and its sublimity. We can see to-day the great ideas which are to control the moral life of the new hundred years. They are the most Christian which the Church has ever held. They are as necessary to the welfare, aye, to the salvation of the world as Paul's doctrine of a universal gospel in his age, or Luther's teaching of the soul's responsibility to God in his. The world is always being saved by its theology. Its future will be shaped as its past has been by the creed of its inmost heart, which will in some form embody the faith for which our Church has striven these hundred years and more.

Why, then, should we hesitate or halt when we see the great multitude of America's Christians

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wheeling into column to follow Hosea Ballou, and taking step with his advancing thought? Why should we be abashed to silence when we hear the message of Ballou reverberating in the mighty tones of the other three great "Bs" of American theology, — Beecher and Bushnell and Brooks? When our elder brothers of the larger churches suggest there is no occasion for us to speak, and tell us that little churches "should be seen and not heard," why do we not rejoin with that famous Scripture, "If these should hold their peace, the very stones of the earth would cry out." It is not for pride and for self-gratulation that we rehearse these historic facts to ourselves. It is that we may think soberly upon the tremendous responsibilities they lay upon us, the solemn trusts of privilege.

The nineteenth century has vindicated the insight of Ballou in the way he marked out for our feet. Will the new one vindicate our courage and faithfulness in walking therein? His leadership in thought put this Church in the van of the marching columns. Will our discipleship keep us there? The stern years will tell. Let us gird up our loins like men, and challenge ourselves in the spirit of Kipling's lines, but two words changed:

"Take up the Christian's burden —
Ye dare not stoop to less —
Nor call too loud on freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye will or whisper,
By all ye learn or do,
The silent, waiting people
Shall weigh your God and you."

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